

**Women in Federal Law Enforcement:
Why Do Non-Supervisory Sworn Female Officers Seek Promotion into
Supervisory Roles and How Did Female Supervisors Get There?**

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Although women continue to enter the workforce at increasing rates, women are still underrepresented in traditionally “masculine” fields such as law enforcement and are especially underrepresented within management. According to a recent report by the National Center for Women and Policing (NCWP), women hold approximately 10% of supervisory roles and 7% of top commands in larger police departments; smaller departments contain even fewer women in supervisory roles and some have none (NCWP, 2002).

The first purpose of the present study was to **identify the factors that influence women’s interest in seeking supervisory positions in the future and what factors influenced or motivated current supervisors to pursue a supervisory position.** Of the female sworn officers surveyed:

- 75% of non-supervisors were interested in seeking a supervisory position. Of those seeking promotion:
 - 89% were willing to work longer hours and 83% were willing to relocate to get it;
 - 86% were encouraged by someone at work (38% by peers, 29% by supervisors, 19% by mentors) and 31% were encouraged by their spouse or family;
 - 78% felt they had the knowledge, skills, and abilities to obtain a supervisory position;
 - 59% wanted to take on more responsibility;
 - 45% felt they could do more;
 - and 26% were motivated by personal reasons.
- Of the non-supervisory women *not* seeking a supervisory position, 67% stated that they were comfortable in their current position.
- **Despite a large interest in supervisory positions, non-supervisory women are unsure about the opportunities for promotion in their organization.**
- Supervisors reported being more motivated by a desire to learn new skills and enhance the organization (both the organization as a whole and women within it) than by personal ego or economic gains in their reasons for becoming a supervisor.

Beyond measuring interest in seeking a supervisory position within law enforcement, and supervisors’ motivations in seeking and accepting such a position, **our investigation also surveyed everyday work experiences that are believed to impact one’s willingness to stay**

with the organization or seek promotion into management. Several work experiences were identified that could be a source of interest in seeking promotion as well as uncertainty about promotion opportunities.

Mentoring:

- 64% of non-supervisors and 64% of supervisors indicated no knowledge of a formal mentoring program in their organization, but 47% of non-supervisors and 53% of supervisors reported actually receiving some form of mentoring.
- Of the respondents who received mentoring, the majority had one formal mentor and two to three informal mentors.
- **Both non-supervisors and supervisors are moderately satisfied with the mentoring they received.**
- **Non-supervisors and supervisors indicated a general willingness to mentor others although they perceive some barriers to their ability to do so.**

Peers:

- While non-supervisors reported having a somewhat positive and supportive relationships with their peer groups and teammates, supervisors reported that their relationships with peers and teammates were neither positive nor negative.
- Such findings could indicate that women are not as accepted and included at work as they want and could also indicate less acceptance of women in supervisory roles by their peers/teammates.

Job Characteristics and Job Satisfaction:

- While non-supervisors indicated their job was sometimes stressful, supervisors reported their job was more frequently stressful.
- **Both non-supervisors and supervisors experience moderate amounts of work interfering with family overall, indicating they feel their work lives lead to moderate amounts of conflict in their family/home lives.**
- Although their job was sometimes stressful, on average **supervisors and non-supervisors were satisfied with their current job and generally have low levels of turnover intentions.**

Harassment and Discrimination:

- **20% of non-supervisors experienced discrimination at work, 47% of whom believed it was due to their sex**
- **21% of supervisors experienced discrimination at work, 62% of whom believed it was due to their sex.**
- **In general, supervisors indicated they experienced more sex-based discrimination than non-supervisors.**
 - 38% of non-supervisors and 26% of supervisors did not receive formal training; 15% of non-supervisors and 29% of supervisors thought it was due to their sex.
 - 36% of non-supervisors and 41% of supervisors were held to a higher performance standard than others; 36% of non-supervisors and 59% of supervisors thought it was due to their sex.

- 30% of non-supervisors and 20% of supervisors did not receive informal training; 16% of non-supervisors and 30% of supervisors thought it was due to their sex.
- 29% of non-supervisors and supervisors experienced sexual harassment; 94% of non-supervisors and 95% of supervisors thought it was due to their sex.
- 29% of non-supervisors and 21% of supervisors did not receive necessary assignments; 44% non-supervisors and 54% of supervisors thought it was due to their sex.
- 27% of non-supervisors and 28% of supervisors did not get a job assignment they were qualified for; 33% of non-supervisors and 44% of supervisors thought it was due to their sex.
- 25% of non-supervisors and supervisors were excluded from social activities; 70% non-supervisors and 50% of supervisors thought it was due to their sex.
- 24% of non-supervisors and 28% of supervisors were held to more scrutiny for job performance than others; 52% of non-supervisors and 78% of supervisors which thought it was due to their sex.
- 22% of non-supervisors and 18% of supervisors received an evaluation rating lower than they deserved; 37% of non-supervisors and 42% of supervisors thought it was due to their sex.
- 12% of non-supervisors and 18% of supervisors had false allegations reported against them; 79% of non-supervisors and 75% of supervisors thought it was due to their sex.
- 12% of non-supervisors and 15% of supervisors were disciplined for something others were not; 57% of non-supervisors and 90% of supervisors thought it was due to their sex.
- 8% of non-supervisors and 2% of supervisors were held to a lower performance standard than others; 80% of non-supervisors and 100% of supervisors thought it was due to their sex.
- 7% of non-supervisors and 18% of supervisors were anonymously reported for minor infractions; 63% of non-supervisors and 100% of supervisors thought it was due to their sex.
- 5% of non-supervisors and 14% of supervisors were investigated by internal affairs; 83% of non-supervisors and 56% of supervisors thought it was due to their sex.
- 4% of non-supervisors and 11% of supervisors experienced pregnancy discrimination.